

MEMPHIS APPEAL

SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 4, 1873

THE RICH AND THE POOR—THE APPEAL

The ambition of demagogues requires a great deal more to satisfy its unworthy craving than any government can furnish without a distinction of its most vital elements. The pernicious doctrine taught by political adventurers, Louisiana and now an effort is made to array the poor against the rich in that unfortunate province. The negroes of Louisiana boldly take the position that they are not caring for the position that the hands are owned by the rich, and they want the taxes so high that the landlords will be forced to sell, and the large amount of land being thus disposed upon the market will enable them to purchase it at a mere song. This is nothing but a mere song. It has been introduced into the minds of the negro by the political adventurers who wish to Africanize Louisiana, drive the whites out of the State, and thereby enable themselves to own and rule the country. We have seen several persons from Louisiana to the northern press, indignantly pointing the finger at the "poor negro" against the "rich-landed laborer." The negroes are told that it was by their labor and sweat that the white man has acquired the property which belongs to them by right. So it is not only the blacks to be arrayed against the whites, but the rich against the poor. Have we come to this? A republic presupposes equality in laws, whereby men attain to wealth and honor by industry and capacity, and no man can never admit that it binds them down to a common level in all other respects. The republics of our days are not like that of Lysander, whose property was for the most part common, and the aristocracy was a small, exclusive, and cumbersome, as to be leaved rather than sought after; nor is this, we presume, the character which the advocates of this doctrine would have us assume. And yet an odious distinction has been drawn, and the rich are provoked by black and white, the rich and the poor, as if the interests of both classes were not dependent on each other, and it was not for the protection of property, as well as person, that the compact was originally formed. Have not the rich and the poor the same rights, the same duties, the same obligations, with all other classes of the community? Nay, do they not, generally speaking, control the property of the rich? Are they excluded from any of the places of trust or profit under the government? Admitting that the rich are better situated than the poor, the principle of our republic in promoting talent and industry, and equalizing the conditions of men by a standard of merit applicable alike to all. In this respect it is a failure, a gross failure, and perfect equality, entails and impracticable. We have none. So well devised are our laws regulating property, that we may never see a third generation enjoying the estate of the first poor. The most princely families divide into two or three generations when it comes to be divided among the heirs or appointees of the original holder. But suppose this were not the case. Has not one individual the same right to his industry, to accumulate and enjoy the fruits of his labor, as another has to spend his life in idleness and subsist on charity? The privilege of the one redounds to the public interest; that of the other to his lasting disgrace and injury. Suppose it were adopted as a part of the system, which the rich are serving politicians would have us adopt, that an agrarian standard should be resorted to every five, ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years. This would be an effective mode of equalizing property—more effective than any other that we can think of. It would lead to a more equitable distribution of all classes and conditions of persons. Will men labor when they have no hope of accumulating and enjoying the fruits of their labor? And will they labor who are sure of being provided for without the necessity of application? Why then, we ask, do we see this odious distinction attempted to be drawn between the rich and the poor? The day will come, if these demagogues live in their teachings, when the condition of the south will be more deplorable than that of France during the days of the bloody tyrant. If we are to have a republic, there is no man who would not a thousand times prefer the control of the most absolute despotism of Europe to the tyranny of a licentious mob.

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